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Graduate training in economics in francophone west and central Africa

H. Jacques Pegatienan

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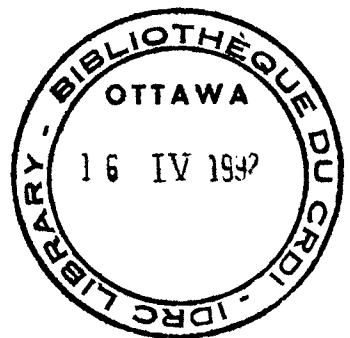
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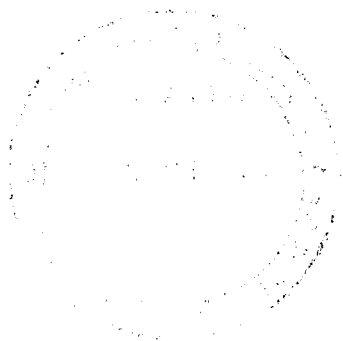
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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assess the relevance of graduate training in economics in francophone west and central Africa (henceforth FWCA), to identify its problems and constraints and to formulate appropriate strategies to address these concerns. The report is based on secondary data as well as interviews of appropriate persons in academia, government and the private sector.

The countries covered are Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal and Zaïre. The travel to Sénégal was made by my colleague Dr. Allechi M'bet who is affiliated to the Université Nationale de Côte d'Ivoire and CIREs.

The report consists of four parts: the background and content of graduate training, the quality of training programmes, the demand for economics graduates, and implications.

I. The background and content of graduate training in economics

Like any other discipline, economics is a coherent set of analytical tools and techniques that must be mastered in order for the economist to become knowledgeable. Professional recognition, however, is not based simply on training, but also on the professional's ability to formulate strategies for solving actual problems. Thus, to be knowledgeable means to deliver with relevance.

Any development issue in Africa today requires some input from economics; but despite significant numbers of economists having been trained in the last 30 years, their impact on African economic thinking and performance seems small.

This section gives the institutional and cultural background to training in economics, then analyses the content of the programmes.

Cultural and institutional background to the training

Francophone west and central Africa inherited its educational system from the colonial powers, with all its advantages and disadvantages. Despite the glaring discrepancies between the realities in each of these countries and that educational system, FWCA made almost no major changes towards more relevance and efficiency, especially in the area of higher education which concerns us here.

One basic problem of the francophone higher education system is its heterogeneity and the implications of that heterogeneity for planning and recruitment procedures both of the civil services and the private sector which absorb the graduates from the education system.

The dichotomy between "grandes Ecoles" and university

We are not aware of the historical reasons for the creation of "grandes Ecoles" alongside universities, but, basically, these "grandes Ecoles" are engineering schools where technical skills are learned and practised, whereas universities are places of intellectual contemplation with no bearing on real life. In typical francophone universities no engineering training is offered. Generally the "grandes Ecoles" student body is recruited from high-school graduates after a minimum

of two years probation in “Ecoles préparatoires” with very high intellectual standards; those who are not lucky enough to make the highly selective admission to “grandes Ecoles” enter university with anger and feelings of deception. Some “probators” may join the university either because they cannot cope with the pressure of permanent hard work or are dropped out by the system. The university has the reputation of being a “take it easy” place where access is open to any high-school graduate and where the student learns theory without a direct link to real-life problems.

The different philosophies of the two groups of higher education institutions determine their links with the private sector and the government. The problem-solving and professional orientation of “grandes Ecoles” requires close ties with the private sector and real life in order to nurture a training process which is in touch with the real needs of the profession. Traditionally, the university in general, and the economics training in particular, has had very weak ties with the business world or the government. This lack of a traditional connection with the real world and real life accounts for the usual preference of the private sector for “grandes Ecoles” graduates at the expense of university graduates.

More specifically, there is competition between “grandes Ecoles” and the university in economics training. Business and applied economics skills needed by the business world and government, respectively, are also acquired in the relevant “grandes Ecoles”; hence business and economics departments in universities compete in the labour market with “grandes Ecoles”, generally to the disadvantage of the former.

This dichotomy in the higher education system has negative implications for training, research and financial policies towards education. As far as the quality of training is concerned, the university training is less intensive, less rigorous and relatively more costly in terms of output. The unfortunate result is that “grandes Ecoles” graduates preempt all the promising jobs in the private sector, while the university graduates are often unemployed for long periods.

The consequences of this dichotomy are disastrous in that more human and financial resources are allocated to “grandes Ecoles” with their relatively small student enrolment compared to the university. The most significant example is Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire, where there are three engineering “grandes Ecoles”. The cost of building the last of these (Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique) was equal to at least two fully fledged universities of the size of the existing one. With a homogenous higher education system and policy, the available funds could adequately equip and develop an integrated higher education institution to the benefit of quality of training and perhaps research.

The lack of interaction between university and real life

Since there are no close ties relating the university to real life, problem-solving research is not a tradition. Therefore the university, in general, and its academic economists in particular, have a reputation for being theoreticians who are unable to formulate practical policy strategies.

The other explanation for this basic handicap is the inability of university-

trained economists to perform empirical verification of theories because they lack practice in statistical and other quantitative methods. Empirical verification of a theory is the test that the theory explains real life and can be accepted; theories that do not pass that test are not good theories and should be abandoned. Empirical verification is a necessary step in applied research. Because economic departments in francophone universities failed to train students in empirical verification, they lost credibility. Francophone academic economists are completely absent from professional bibliographies.

In these economics departments there is neither an applied research tradition nor a stock of up-to-date textbooks. If no applied research is conducted and no new innovative publications are published, textbooks cannot incorporate new material, especially material on applied methodologies. The availability of good textbooks and up-to-date review articles is the first condition for adequate graduate training; francophone economics departments are at a disadvantage in those crucial areas.

The need to diversify the source of training in economics

Francophone economics departments are traditionally good in the areas of descriptive, historical and institutional perspective—an emphasis that they probably retained from their long association with law schools. Although the history and institutions of the disciplines are essential in understanding bottlenecks to economic development, no progress is possible without hard facts and practical policies, and the latter cannot exist in the absence of empirical verification. What francophone Africa really needs is relevant theory, institutional perspective and empirical verification; hence the need to combine many sources of training until the region is able to achieve the appropriate blend.

The content and products of graduate training programmes

Graduate training in economics is older in Côte d'Ivoire (1976) than in Cameroun (1979) and Sénégal (1984). There is none in Zaïre.

The graduate programme in Sénégal

In 1984, the Economics Department of the Faculty of Law and Economics established a graduate programme in business and one in economics. The business programme is the most popular and has achieved significant results in terms of output, but we are interested only in economics.

The main objectives of the "Doctorate 3ème cycle" programme were, firstly, to create a pool of qualified economists whom the Economics Department can tap to fill its staff positions; and, secondly, to upgrade the analytical skills of professionals already in the labour market. The recruitment of a maximum of 50 students was based on an admission test; those elected students have completed four years undergraduate course work.

The two-year training programme includes course work and a thesis research. The first-year course work has three parts: microeconomics, macroeconomics and quantitative methods (mathematics, statistics, econometrics), with an allocation of 75 hours each. The exact course content and relative emphasis of different topics are determined by a graduate training co-ordinator. The second-year course work includes international economics (50 hours) and two fields of specialization (a total of 75 hours) chosen out of six options. During this second year research period, seminars are conducted on selected topics (a total of 65 hours). The course work and research total 415 hours.

The exam system includes, at the end of first year, a five-hour written test on micro, macro and quantitative methods, and a 30-minute oral examination for those who obtain 10/20 grade average on either microeconomics or macroeconomics. At the end of the second year, there is another five-hour written exam on international economics and on one specialized field. Then the student has to make an oral defence of his thesis and finally there is an oral examination on the second specialized field.

Written as it is, this programme seems adequate, but the fact that not a single graduate has emerged so far is troublesome.

Graduate training in economics at the University of Yaoundé: Cameroun

A two-year "Doctorat 3ème cycle" programme was established in 1979/80 with the objective of training economists to a high level. The programme consists of one year's course work and one year of research. A course of one-hour weekly lectures is offered in micro and macroeconomics and quantitative methods. Written and oral examinations are taken at the end of the first year. Those students who qualify for the second year attend research seminars with the objective of writing a dissertation.

The content of the programme, as well as its management, are the responsibility of a visiting lecturer from France who delivers the required 50 hours per course in two weeks. The university regulations require that staff teaching at the graduate level must be full professors or the equivalent of associate professors. So far, only one Cameroun national, presently on the teaching staff, meets these academic requirements. Others, even with PhDs, cannot and do not participate in the teaching of graduate courses.

From discussions with the chairman of the Economics Department and Deputy Dean, I gathered that the thrust of the programme is political economy with greater emphasis on descriptive, historical and institutional perspectives than on analytical tools, empirical verification and policy-oriented and problem-solving research.

Training in economics at the Université de Kinshasa, Zaïre

Study of the five-year undergraduate programme of the Faculty of Economics indicates that the level of training is adequate both analytically and quantitatively. The programme is longer than elsewhere (five years versus four years in

Sénégal, Cameroun and Côte d'Ivoire) and seems much more applied than its other francophone counterparts.

There is no graduate training in economics at the Université de Kinshasa of the type encountered in other countries. The only alternative available to students who graduate after five years with a grade average equal to or greater than 70%, is the writing of a dissertation under the supervision of resident staff members. This dissertation cannot be defended before the end of the five years, and during this period the candidate holds a teaching assistantship position. This situation can be portrayed as a doctorate programme with thesis only.

Graduate training in economics in Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire there are two different courses, one on the "Doctorat 3ème cycle en Economie Rurale", a graduate programme in agricultural economics jointly sponsored by the Faculty of Economics and CIRES, a research centre, and the "Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA)" offered by the Faculty of Economics.

The Faculty of Economics DEA

The Faculty of Economics established its graduate programme in 1976–1977 as the logical development of the overall training in economics. Since, at that time, senior staff members were French, the programme was designed in the French tradition despite the opposition of a few junior colleagues who argued that priorities should be in the direction of greater consistency and improvement in the content of existing undergraduates courses. After ten years of experience the structure and the content of the programme have changed little.

The one-year DEA program has no course work, but three seminars on the following subjects: theory, quantitative methods, and specialized fields. The theory seminar is expected to strengthen the analytical abilities of students in either microeconomics or macroeconomics, but the staff member responsible for the seminar can choose one limited topic in the area of general theory. Thus this topic changes with the interests of the staff member appointed.

The quantitative methods seminar deals with statistics, econometrics and operations research. Again, staff members decide on what to include in those seminars without any specific guidance from the Department.

There are two specialized fields: one in economics and the other in business.

Over the years, economics seminars and research topics were grouped into two main areas: money and finance, and trade and development. Further subdivisions were made within these, such as the economics of the state, agricultural economics and economics of transportation. Each seminar meets once or twice a week, but unlike in Sénégal, no specific time load is imposed on staff members and students. Although this is officially a one-year programme, it frequently happened that the actual time of useful work was four or five months.

It is obvious that the content of the graduate programme is not impressive, but it has produced a number of graduates. Table 1 shows that the system produced

six DEA graduates in economics per year over the last ten years. Over the last five years, one of those graduates per year could complete his “Doctorat de 3ème cycle” dissertation. This dissertation is officially expected to be produced two years after completion of the DEA programme, with no further course work or research seminars.

Table 1 Output of DEA graduates, Faculty of Economics

	Business		Economics		Total
	Ivoiriens	Non-Ivoiriens	Ivoiriens	Non-Ivoiriens	
1980	—	—	—	1	1
1981	2	3	7	2	14
1982	2	3	5	4	14
1983	—	—	3	3	6
1984	5	2	4	0	11
1985	—	1	5	1	7
1986	—	4	—	3	7
1987	1	4	4	1	10
1988	1	—	4	2	7
1989	2	3	4	1	10
Total	13	20	36	18	87

Source: Faculty of Economics, Registrar documents.

Graduate training in agricultural economics at the Faculty of Economics and CIRES

CIRES is a university research institute which was established in 1971 by the Ministry of Scientific Research with the objective of supporting economic research at the Faculty of Economics. Because of discrepancies in research philosophies (fundamental versus applied or policy-oriented research), the institute had to grow more independently. Between 1974 and 1981 it planned and implemented a research programme with special emphasis on agricultural and rural development. Along with the research programme, it launched a fellowship programme aimed at training nationals in all areas of economics with a strong emphasis on agricultural economics which was consistent with the focus of the research programme. Until 1985, CIRES was exclusively a research institute; since 1985 it has added in-house training to its professional activities.

Although staffed by nationals with the same educational background as those at the Faculty of Economics, (in fact the senior staff of CIRES were simultaneously on the teaching staff of the Faculty of Economics), CIRES emphasized ap-

plied and policy-oriented research that required field work, quantitative methods and empirical verification. Their colleagues at the Faculty of Economics did not feel comfortable with these intellectual challenges. The challenge became even more acute as the fellowship programme sent about ten nationals for Ph.D. training in the US. Besides the discrepancies in methodological approach, there was an administrative requirement that the faculty members could not meet: accountability to the Ministry of Scientific Research in terms of research output.

But after ten years of isolated development, the two institutions did try to reduce their differences and managed to agree on a joint graduate training programme in agricultural economics. Co-sponsored by CIRES and the Faculty of Economics, which grants the diploma, this programme was approved by the university council.

The objectives of the programme are to train Africans in their own environments with the expectation that a better knowledge of these environments through empirical research will help develop new thinking from within Africa. The strong regional focus of the programme offers, in addition, a potential for comparative work in FWCA. The student body is selected from all over FWCA after an admission test, and the undergraduate background must be either economics or agronomy.

The programme covers nine semesters of 13 weeks each, distributed over three years and totalling about 600 hours of academic work. It includes course work, field research and a dissertation. The mandatory core course work consists of economics theory (advanced micro/macro theory and international economics), quantitative methods (econometrics, linear programming, research methodology) and agricultural economics production, marketing, agricultural development, agricultural and food policy. Students are also required to take two optional courses out of a pool that can expand or shrink according to the human resources available and student needs. These optional courses are related to the field of concentration available: production, marketing and agricultural and food policy.

Course work takes the form of lectures totalling 32 credits. One credit is worth 18 hours, therefore the total course work represents 576 hours, exclusive of the workload of home assignments and term papers. There is a written exam for each course at the end of each semester. Course work ends after the fourth semester. During the fifth semester, in the middle of the second year, students take a comprehensive exam in each mandatory subject as well as in the two selected optional courses. The next step is a research proposal that is prepared and defended as the last test of the student's readiness to go for field work. A student who successfully completes the course work, the comprehensive exam and the research proposal is granted the DEA. To get this award the weighted grade average on these three elements must be higher than or equal to 10/20.

The student then goes for field work and data collection in his home country for at least a whole agricultural cycle, before returning to CIRES where he will analyse the data, write the dissertation and defend it.

Table 2 gives the total of students enrolled in that programme; the regional

focus is marked as Ivoiriens represent 33% of those on the programme. The discipline representation is dominated by economists with 20 (51%), followed by agronomists with 19. The first graduate of the programme is a Burkina Faso citizen who defended his dissertation in June 1988. Five Ivoiriens and one Beninois are scheduled to defend theirs by the end of December 1989 at the latest.

Table 2 Distribution of students by country of origin in the graduate training programme in agricultural economics

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Benin	1	3	2	1	1	8
Burkina Faso	2	—	1	2	2	7
Centrafrique	—	1	—	—	—	1
Côte d'Ivoire	5	2	—	3	3	13
Guinee	—	—	—	1	1	2
Mali	1	—	—	1	—	2
Niger	—	1	—	—	—	1
Sénégal	—	—	2	—	1	3
Tchad	—	—	1	—	—	1
Togo	—	1	—	—	—	1
Total	9	8	6	8	8	39

Source: Secrétariat général du programme de Doctorat en Economie Rurale, CIREs/Faculté des Sciences Economiques.

II. Factors affecting the quality of graduate training in economics

In this section we attempt to make a judgement as to how adequate the programmes described above are and to what extent they need to be improved. The quality of the programme depends on human and material resources, content, the scientific environment, the incentive structure and the quality of the students.

Material and human resources

In all countries visited, the student population has grown rapidly over the last few years, while the physical infrastructure and material equipment was lagging behind. Staff office space is in short supply in all universities visited, the worst situation probably being that at the University of Yaoundé where three or four staff members share a small office when it is available. Inadequate library facilities and numbers of scientific journals and the shortage of textbooks are also common problems. As far as computing facilities are concerned, only the Faculty of Economics and CIRES in Abidjan and the economics departments at the University of Yaoundé have at least two PCs or PSs. Although a computer centre usually exists for the whole university, the time allocation to different departments is not always well organized. However, in some case, as in Cameroun for example, the existing computing facilities are used more for administrative work than for research purposes.

In general, the human-resources situation is not bright. In Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun the student/staff ratios in the economics departments are about 25 and 167, respectively; the ratio is approximately 60 in Sénégal and greater than 167 in Kinshasa. In most cases there is a teaching overload that leaves no time for research.

Unlike Sénégal and Zaïre, no staff member can be recruited at a level lower than "Doctorat 3ème cycle" in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun; only holders of a "Doctorat d'Etat" or a Ph.D., so far earned abroad, are eligible for the highest positions in the teaching hierarchy. Another restriction in Cameroun is that the teaching staff of the graduate programme have to be at least the equivalent of Associate Professor. The percentages of staff members that are of this level are 3%, 10% and 10% in Cameroun, Sénégal and Côte d'Ivoire, respectively.

Programme content

The basic characteristic of the graduate programmes reviewed is that they do not teach analytical tools in a consistent and progressive way; instead description, historical and institutional perspectives are the main focus. Given that basic deficiency, the Senegalese programme seems more adequate than its counterparts at the Faculties of Economics in Côte d'Ivoire and Yaoundé.

The second problem is the lack of empirical verification in the programmes. Empirical verification is essential in order to assess whether theories can be applied without modification or should be discarded immediately because of complete irrelevance. What empirical verification provides is a research methodology, an attitude toward problem formulation and policy analysis; this attitude is what FWCA economists need most. But no empirical verification is possible without the appropriate application of quantitative methods.

What is the best way to acquire these analytical and problem-oriented research skills? Systematic course work seems the best method. On that score, the Senegalese programme compares favourably with that of the Abidjan Faculty of Economics which uses seminars as the vehicle for transferring knowledge. The seminars in Abidjan are not productive as the students do the talking without prior theoretical or methodological guidance; generally the student gains nothing substantive from the teacher besides comments on formal presentation. Another method is "papers"; the writing of papers forces the graduate to start familiarizing himself with the professional literature through literature review. Course work plus "paper" is a good combination of methods that should be promoted in graduate programmes. In Cameroun, however, not enough course work is done.

The graduate training in agricultural economics in Côte d'Ivoire is a significant improvement. Research methodology is an integral part of the course work and the student is encouraged to practise those skills through term papers and the research proposal at the end of the fifth semester. In addition, a research methodology seminar was introduced recently in the DEA of the Faculty of Economics in Côte d'Ivoire.

Intellectual environment

The intellectual environment of the economics departments does not facilitate the upgrading of the training. The main reason is that staff members do not conduct research projects, either individually or in groups. The basic reason for this is the weak analytical capability complicated by the lack of research methodology; these drawbacks combined are too great an obstacle in the short run. Since no significant research is carried out, seminars are meaningless. When someone does volunteer to organize them in order to create opportunities for interaction, the attendance is poor. Those who do participate are seldom able to comment on analytical matters or to measure theory against African realities and policy implications. This is particularly true for Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun.

Incentive structure

Besides analytical and methodological obstacles, the quality of teaching and research is limited by the existing incentive structure. The teaching load and the unproductive scientific environment described earlier, are the basic obstacles that prevent staff members from meeting the publications requirements of the promotion system. The time required between promotions is deemed too long, especially in Sénégal, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun. In addition to these handicaps, low salaries force staff members to take extra work outside the university to make ends meet, therefore they have no time left for research. This is particularly true in Zaïre. Consultancy contracts with the private sector or government have not yet become a tradition in the countries visited, except Zaïre. There are two reasons for this: first, the government is deeply suspicious of local social scientists because of their tendency to question the establishment, and second, the typical FWCA professional economist is not equipped to be policy oriented.

In the countries visited, there are generally no fringe benefits to compensate for low salaries (in Côte d'Ivoire these benefits existed in the form of free housing until 1983). One major non-pecuniary fringe benefit is the feeling that one is participating in the decision-making process by contributing ideas through consultancies. So far there has been no such incentive in these countries except, perhaps, in Zaïre where the staff of the Faculty of Economics seem to be very much in demand by the government.

Quality and motivation of students

The quality of the graduate students is partly to blame for the nature of the training programme. This can be seen clearly by contrasting the two Côte d'Ivoire programmes. The Faculty of Economics DEA cannot have day-time classes or plan a more adequate programme because the student body consists of people who currently hold jobs both in the private and in the public sector; they have no time to read or to do home assignments. The second obstacle is the lack of scholarships which would allow students to devote sufficient time to study. On both these scores the graduate training in agricultural economics is different as it is a full-time programme with three-year scholarships. This explains the quick results; the quality of the output is yet to be tested.

The situation is different in Sénégal and Cameroun where a student admitted after the selection test enjoys a government scholarship. This should enhance the quality of the training programme.

In conclusion, the FWCA graduate training programmes, in common with other parts of Africa, have the problems of inadequate materials, human resources and incentive structure. But, in addition, the content of these programmes lacks relevance and wide recognition, probably because of basic deficiencies in the training of the majority of the present staff members.

III. The demand for economists in francophone Africa

One possible reason why the state of graduate training is generally poor is that there is no demand for highly trained economists in general and for locally trained ones in particular. This section examines this problem at four levels: the private sector, government, research, and teaching.

Demand for economists by the private sector

From my conversation with businessmen it appears that the business world is sector and production oriented. Even though the leadership of a firm in a specific sector cares for the impact of its own actions and strategies on its competitors' positions, it cares less about their implications for other sectors and even less for the whole economy, unless it holds a monopoly on the market. My impression is that, to the extent that production for a specific market is the prime activity of the business world, the private sector needs engineering skills more than economists; to them economists, without engineers, are useless.

Should the private sector need economists, their preference is for economists trained in "grandes Ecoles" rather than from the Faculty of Economics DEA because the former's training is more relevant and they tend to be immediately productive. For the immediate future, I do not foresee any increase in demand by the private sector for graduate economists trained by the Faculty of Economics. This diagnosis is probably even more applicable to Côte d'Ivoire.

Demand for economists by the government

Even though the implicit demand for economists by government is high, the revealed demand is much less because those whose job it is to assess the requirements are not equipped to do so. The implicit demand for economists has always been high—in prosperous years as well as in a structural-adjustment period. We can measure that demand by the overwhelming presence of technical assistants in ministries such as Planning, Finance, Agricultural and Rural Development, and Commerce.

Technical assistance was at its height in Côte d'Ivoire in the sixties and seventies, especially in the ministries of Planning, Finance and Agriculture. This

seems also to have been the case for Cameroun. The jobs performed by these persons, both at the sectoral and macroeconomic levels, required economic skills beyond those acquired in local undergraduate training. The intensity of this implicit demand could also be measured by the volume and frequency of consulting contracts with foreign private consulting firms, either for major national projects or for the regular five-year planning process. Despite the existence of this large demand, the economics faculties could not develop adequate programmes to meet the demand because of the lack of connection between university and real life. At a time when project evaluation was a booming business, a natural direction would have been to develop a graduate programme in project evaluation for all kinds of ministries.

There was a large implicit demand for policy analysis, formulation and for medium- and long-term forecasting at the Ministry of Planning between 1965 and 1976 in Côte d'Ivoire; only graduate training in economics with special emphasis on applied macroeconomics can provide the skills needed to perform these tasks. Had close ties existed between the Faculty of Economics and the Ministry of Planning, there would have been scope for the university to be relevant and productive.

Stabilization and structural-adjustment policies and programmes had generated a large implicit demand for economists earlier in Sénégal and Zaïre than in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun. For at least the last ten years structural adjustment has been taking place over Africa in general, and FWCA in particular, because it is there that a significant number of least developed African countries are located. There is a large implicit demand for skilled economists, specially macro-economists, not only for the management and monitoring of stabilization and structural adjustment programmes, but also for the negotiation of these programmes with the IMF and the World Bank, the French Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique and the European Economic Community Fund for Economic Development, or with other donors. The use of foreign technical assistants to perform these tasks is the most evident expression of this implicit demand.

An explicit demand for skilled economists does exist today for project evaluation, medium- and long-term policy formulation and planning and for macroeconomic management, but it cannot be met, not only because of the lack of supply, but also because many administrative regulations prevent it. Had such skilled economists been available, however, they would not be motivated because in general civil service a DEA or even a Ph.D. is put on the same footing as someone with an undergraduate degree. The only highly valued diploma in the general civil service is that awarded by the "grandes Ecole" for administration. This is true for Sénégal, Cameroun, and Côte d'Ivoire, but not for Zaïre. Neither is it reasonable to expect someone to spend so much time on graduate studies and then be forced to go through the "grande Ecole" for administration (ENA) before his skills can be adequately remunerated. Ironically, this administrative bottleneck is one justification for the high demand for technical assistants who may, in fact, be less qualified academically. Since the country can no

longer afford it, an essential job cannot be performed.

Because of this dichotomy between university and “grandes Ecoles”, the ENA graduates end up making decisions on macroeconomic issues for which they are not equipped, while those who are sufficiently skilled for the job cannot be recruited or lack the motivation to perform adequately. Thus, lack of administrative flexibility may prevent technical ministries from acquiring the skills they need.

Demand for economists by the research system in Côte d'Ivoire

Significant agronomic research took place in Côte d'Ivoire that partly explains the success of export agriculture over the last 25 years. But it was realized in 1973/74 that agronomic research alone could not solve all the problems of productivity and modernization. New technologies needed to be evaluated before the extension phase at the farmers' level; the farmers themselves had to be convinced that a new technology they are asked to try is better than the old one they are used to; to them better technologies mean economically profitable technologies. It was realized that at this stage there is no substitute for the economist; in 1974 the Ministry of Scientific Research appointed two “agroeconomists”—basically agronomists with a specialization in economics—one for the savannah areas and the other for the forest areas. Since then the CIRES research programme was strengthened, gained momentum and built up a reputation which it had had trouble developing in the previous eight years. (The Ministry of Scientific Research established CIRES as the national co-ordinator of agricultural economics and rural development research programmes.)

The recognition of economic analysis as a necessary step in agricultural research and development was institutionalized by directing the research needs of parastatals in charge of agricultural extension (SODES) towards CIRES. The same strategy was adopted by the Ministry of Scientific Research for all research needs in sectors such as industry and employment, for example. It is on the basis of this strong support for economics by the Research Ministry that CIRES developed its fellowship programme abroad. These demands were strongest in agricultural economics, hence the emphasis of the research and the fellowship programmes on agricultural economics and rural development.

This early demand for economic analysis by the Research Ministry and agricultural extension agencies still exists, though it is less strong than before because of the present economic crisis. A major agronomic research programme on cereals is under way with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Scientific Research. It includes a large economic analysis component. At the request of the major agricultural extension agency in the savannah region, CIRES has agreed to provide its economic skills for any economic problem that arises, on a permanent basis.

All these examples indicate that an explicit demand exists for economic skills,

especially in agriculture and rural development. These demands can be met because the graduate programme in agricultural economics develops the required skills through mandatory field work.

Demand for economists from academia

At the Faculty of Economics in Abidjan, there is a greater need for staff in business than in economics. Both the implicit and explicit demand for new economists is small in Abidjan; it is probably higher in Sénégal, Cameroun and Zaïre. Had that demand been high, the Faculty of Economics of Abidjan could not rely on its graduates because it cannot recruit below the "Doctorat 3ème cycle" degree, and the output of the system is small. In Sénégal, where the demand is probably higher and recruitment is still possible with DEA, budgetary problems seem to limit employment opportunities in the Economics Department.

CIRES, at the University of Abidjan, is a specific example. The demand for economists by CIRES as a teaching institution will certainly grow in the near future since CIRES was selected at the Francophone Summit in Dakar in May 1989 as the leader institution for research and training in agricultural economics for the whole francophone area. In order to live up to this exciting scientific challenge, CIRES needs, firstly, to upgrade both the research and teaching performance of its 30 resident staff members and, secondly, to recruit new staff from Côte d'Ivoire and from the region in order to increase the capacity of its present faculty.

The foregoing analysis shows that the business world, so far, is not much interested in the type of economists that are being trained in francophone economics departments. Implicit and explicit demand for economists exists in government but cannot be met by the existing graduate programme in Abidjan and Yaoundé. Potential demand could be partially met in Dakar. Research needs in agricultural economics are substantial; the demand is explicit and can be adequately met in Côte d'Ivoire, but probably not in Sénégal or in Cameroun.

IV. Implications

Since demand for economists is still strong and expected to grow, something needs to be done if Africa is to meet the challenges of providing such economists.

The challenge to African economists

In its confrontation with all kinds of adversities Africa has a fundamental problem: a culture that is not conducive to economic progress. The first challenge to Africa, then, is to solve its cultural problem. The second set of challenges is how to deal with issues like productivity of investment, the saving/investment balance, the domestic market/foreign market mix, and the state/market mix.

The cultural challenge

Africans, especially the urban African elite, have at least three attitudes that are not conducive to progress: lack of frugality, lack of a willingness to economize, and lack of hard work or perseverance.

The lack of frugality is an attitude toward consumption and saving that leads these elites to display a pronounced taste for wasteful consumption and sophistication. The willingness to economize is an attitude that prompts one to strive either for a larger bundle of goods and services with a given set of resources, or for a given bundle of goods and services with a smaller set of resources. The urban African elites lack this willingness to economize, hence the wasting of time, the absence of rigour in work, and mismanagement. Finally, the lack of hard work and perseverance explain why African elites are so averse to taking risks.

The economic challenges

The enhancement of overall productivity and of the productivity of public investment, in particular, is the first economic issue that must be resolved before Africa can modernize; productivity growth is the result of new attitudes, consistent effort and appropriate financing. Financing is the second major economic constraint. The present overall saving/investment balance shows a significant need for more internal saving effort, another attitude which is not very popular

among the elites. A lack of innovative mobilization methods shares significant responsibility too. The world market has been the engine of growth and prosperity for a few African countries; the same world market has been burying them for the last ten years. We need to strike a balance between domestic markets and the world market. Stabilization and structural adjustment policies and programmes endeavour to convince Africa that the state should retrench in order for the private sector and the market to prosper. What should be required from the state is an increase of productivity of public investment; provided public investment (in physical infrastructure and human capital, for example) is productive, the state creates the market by raising the rate of return of private investment. Is the state/market competition a real issue for Africa today? The economic challenge cannot be met unless the cultural challenge is won first. How should research and training in economics be improved in order to meet these challenges?

Implications for domestic teaching institutions

Economists should play the rôle of eye openers to the cultural and economic problems sketched above. The keen observation of their environments should result in new analyses and policies after appropriate empirical verification. This requires, first, a close association between problem (or issue) oriented research and innovative teaching; second, strengthening of ties between the university and the real world; and third, production of relevant teaching materials which focus on African realities.

We do not need to elaborate further on these topics. I wish to emphasize, however, that Africa needs science-based development which it will not be able to afford unless there is intensive collaboration between research and teaching. This intensive collaboration should intervene in the following areas: project evaluation with emphasis on the social dimensions, international finance, medium- and long-term planning, macroeconomic management, agricultural economics and rural development.

In order to develop the policy-oriented research and innovative teaching capabilities of staff members of francophone economics departments, there is an urgent need for retraining programmes in order to supplement their historical and institutional perspectives. This could be done by a one-or two-year programme of course work and research seminars. Although the demand for this retraining programme is particularly strong in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun, there may be substantial administrative problems in implementing it since there is no sabbatical leave tradition in francophone universities.

Implications for regional activities

The August workshop in Nairobi indicated clearly that individual institutions do

not welcome initiatives that might take away the potential or existing graduate training programmes. Thus the appropriate strategy is to develop core graduate programmes, where there is a desire and the resources to do so, and then to regionalize areas of specialization according to the relative endowment of individual institutions. For example, Côte d'Ivoire would be the natural regional centre for specialization in agricultural economics and rural development; Sénégal could develop expertise in macroeconomic management and international finance on the basis of its existing programme; it is also appropriate because of the presence of the headquarters of the West African Monetary Union Central Bank. Zaïre could adequately host training programmes in project evaluation and medium-and long-term planning because of the applied characteristics of its existing undergraduate programme. This regionalization requires structural collaboration between institutions and regional centres of the francophone region; hence networking activities will be necessary as the instrument of this collaboration.

Implications for the donor community

Institution-building finance is needed in FWCA. Local as well as regional centres for training and specialization in economics need support to grow professionally, to generate new teaching material and to disseminate this material throughout the region. Since networking activities are essential for different sub-regions in order for them to share experience, the financing of such activities is a top priority.

Besides these new activities, the traditional activity of training new students abroad is still required, given the limited human resources of FWCA.

Implications for AERC

AERC has been a catalyst in the existing research network and fellowship programme. It can play the same role for training. For francophone Africa the priority, as argued above, is the retraining of most staff. Within the limits of its present and future funding, AERC can help establish such a retraining programme. The next step is networking activities in training in order to promote communication and exchange of experiences and expertise between local institutions and regional centres of specialization. The role of AERC would be to facilitate the implementation of ideas emanating from the institutions themselves and expressed in groups like regular workshops.

V. Conclusions

The major conclusion of this report is that, in addition to inadequate infrastructure, financial resources and incentive structure, the francophone universities visited suffer from major deficiencies in the training of a significant proportion of existing staff members. This explains the low quality of graduate training programmes in economics. Therefore, retraining programmes are the priority action. AERC and the donor community can help in enhancing the quality of graduate training in economics in francophone Africa.

The principal objective of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), established in August 1988, is to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to special needs of the region, AERC has adopted a flexible approach to improve the technical skills of local researchers, allow for regional determination of research priorities, strengthen national institutions concerned with economic policy research, and facilitate closer ties between researchers and policymakers.

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